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## BOOK REVIEWS AND NOTICES

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*The Evolution of the English Corn Market from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century.* By NORMAN SCOTT BRIEN GRAS. (Harvard Economic Studies, XIII.) Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1915. 8vo, pp. xiii+498. \$2.50 net.

This book deserves very considerable attention from students of economic history. With the exception of Faber's Monograph (*Die Entstehung des Agrarschutzes in England*) published nearly thirty years ago and Naudé's chapters on England in his general discussion of the corn trade policy of European states, practically no serious attempt has been made to set forth the earlier history of the English corn trade. Moreover, neither Faber nor Naudé go far beyond the policy of the government toward the trade. Their point of view is rather political than economic and they have often missed the full significance of governmental regulation by their failure to grasp the economic conditions out of which such regulation proceeded. Dr. Gras has approached the subject from an economic standpoint, and though he does not ignore the question of governmental regulation, he makes it subservient to his main purpose of tracing the evolution of the English corn market, or, as we should say, wheat market, from the twelfth to the eighteenth century.

The main thesis of his book is, briefly, that the English corn market, during the time in which he considers it, passed through three distinct stages. The first stage he designates as the stage of the manorial market, the second, that of the local market, and the third, that of the metropolitan market. In discussing the manorial market perhaps the most striking point which he makes is that the manor was not the isolated, self-supporting economic unit it used to be considered to be. Dr. Gras has demonstrated clearly that there was a well-defined corn trade between different manors of the same lordship. He believes that in many, he is disposed to say in most, instances manors of the same lordship were organized into groups within which there was a regular transport of corn and by means of which the enterprising lord was able to distribute his surplus product over a rather wide market area. He does not deny that there existed at the same time a local market near by

in which the lord's tenants disposed of their surplus grain, but he takes the inter-manorial trade to be the characteristic feature of the period of manorial marketing. It does not appear, however, that his evidence altogether justifies this assumption. Even if the existence of inter-manorial trade to a considerable extent be accepted, it still remains to be proved that it was sufficiently prevalent to constitute the normal state of things. A priori it would seem probable, at a period in which the market demands must have been relatively small, that the local area around the market-place would be its chief source of supply, especially when the difficulty and expense of conveying grain over land was so great as it must have been. Nor is it manifest that even in this early period the corn-monger played no part in assisting the small producer to reach a wider market. There is evidence of his activity in connection with the corn trade of Lynn very early in the fourteenth century and he was certainly active on the Continent long before that time. It is true that before 1300 the evidences of a local market in England are scant and the English records appear to be silent on the subject of corn-mongers, but any argument *e silentio* is dangerous at this early period. It is certainly unsafe to assume that the state of things recorded in the manor rolls of a few large lordships can be taken to represent the normal state of things. Yet unless we make that assumption, the distinction which Dr. Gras draws between the period of the manorial market and that of the local market can hardly be justified.

From the manorial corn market Dr. Gras proceeds to discuss the local corn market which, according to his view, superseded it. On the basis of a rather elaborate analysis of corn prices he undertakes to divide Southern and Eastern England into some fifteen local market areas. To the reviewer these divisions appear to be rather arbitrary. Even though there are preserved some thousands of corn prices for the period between 1250 and 1500, it is doubtful if the price material furnishes sufficient evidence to establish, on the basis of differential price levels, even the approximate boundaries of local market areas. Furthermore, Dr. Gras, in spite of the decided variations in price within the same local area, is forced to depend upon unweighted averages which can hardly be taken as safe guides. Moreover, he himself admits that from the first there existed a considerable inter-area trade. In the face of these facts and with little or no other evidence to confirm the existence of such market areas as he defines, it can only be concluded that his definition of them is tentative at best. Indeed, it may be questioned whether,

in view of the extensive inter-area trade, the history of the English corn market between 1250 and 1500 should be quite so precisely designated as the period of the local market area.

The last stage which Dr. Gras considers in the evolution of the English corn market is what he calls the metropolitan stage, in which the demand for corn at London determined the organization of the corn trade. So large a part of his book is devoted to this phase of the subject that it might perhaps have better been called "The Evolution of the London Corn Market." He dates the beginning of the domination of London in this particular at about the year 1500 and expresses the belief that before that date London depended mainly for its wheat supply upon the local area of the Lower Thames. With the latter part of this statement it is not easy to agree. Situated as the city was with easy access by water to the valley of the Upper Thames on one hand and the coastal regions of East Anglia and Kent on the other, it is difficult to believe that London did not, from a very early date, draw a considerable part of her supply from these remoter sources. The evidence which Dr. Gras himself adduces (p. 104, n. 3, *inter alia*) goes to show that she did, in which case the beginnings of a metropolitan area must be set long before 1500. The dimensions of this area increased, of course, as London grew in population and importance, yet it is more than doubtful whether, even as late as the eighteenth century, the whole English corn trade had succumbed to London's influence. Dr. Gras does not maintain that it did. He does, however, in his consideration of the corn market from the fifteenth century onward, ignore all those elements of it not embraced by the metropolitan area, and so presents, from the point of view of England as a whole, an incomplete picture. We should like to know more about the situation in Bristol, for instance, which was, after London, the largest of English cities, or even, for that matter, in Lynn and Hull, places of some importance in the history of the export corn trade.

It will be apparent that all these criticisms are leveled at the attempt of Dr. Gras to reduce the conflicting and fragmentary material upon the history of the English corn trade to a precise and logical scheme of things. Such an attempt is in itself highly commendable, and it is a great misfortune that the facts do not more readily lend themselves to some such orderly classification. As they stand they convey the impression of a situation far less uniform at any given time and far less systematic in its development than Dr. Gras would have us accept. Yet even if this be admitted, it should not be allowed to becloud the

obvious merits of an exceedingly valuable monograph. Dr. Gras is very far from being a mere theorizer. His research work has been careful, extensive, and brilliantly productive. His appendices, which occupy almost half his book, bear adequate testimony to this fact, as does his bibliography of sources. Research students in English economic history have good reason to be eternally grateful to him for revealing the wealth of material in the English Port Books which he has, apparently, been the first student to exploit. Scarcely less illuminating has been his work in the records of the city of London and in the archives of the various London companies. His statistics on the export and import of corn from the various English ports during the period from 1550 to 1700 (Appendices C, D, E) are invaluable, though they are probably incomplete. His corn prices for London in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Appendix E) supply a grave omission in Thorold Rogers' *History of Agriculture and Prices*. The other *pièces justificatives* which he prints are also valuable additions to the meager supply of accessible sources on the subject, though he might perhaps have omitted the document which he gives in Appendix J since it appeared in full in the *English Historical Review* a little while ago.

Numerous other instances could be adduced to illustrate the careful scholarship which pervades the whole book, but these will serve to establish the fact that it does great credit to the author, already favorably known by his able articles on the Customs Revenue and the Corn Bounty. Incidentally this latest addition to the Harvard Economic Studies bears testimony once more to the inspiring genius of Professor Gay who has prompted so much excellent work in the field of economic history.

CONYERS READ

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

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*Scientific Management and Labor.* By R. F. HOXIE. New York: Appleton, 1915. 8vo pp. x+302. \$1.50 net.

So far as the writer is aware this book is the first of its kind, since it presents for the first time an evaluation of scientific management, so called, from the viewpoint of a trained economist who has had an unusual opportunity to study these new methods at first hand and as they exist in actual operation. Professor Hoxie is so well known as a student of labor problems that the book will no doubt be read with interest by economists; but it is of greater importance to managers of indus-